Includes Orem Chronology

IT HAPPENED IN OREM

A Bicentennial History of Orem, Utah

by

Orem Bicentennial History Committee

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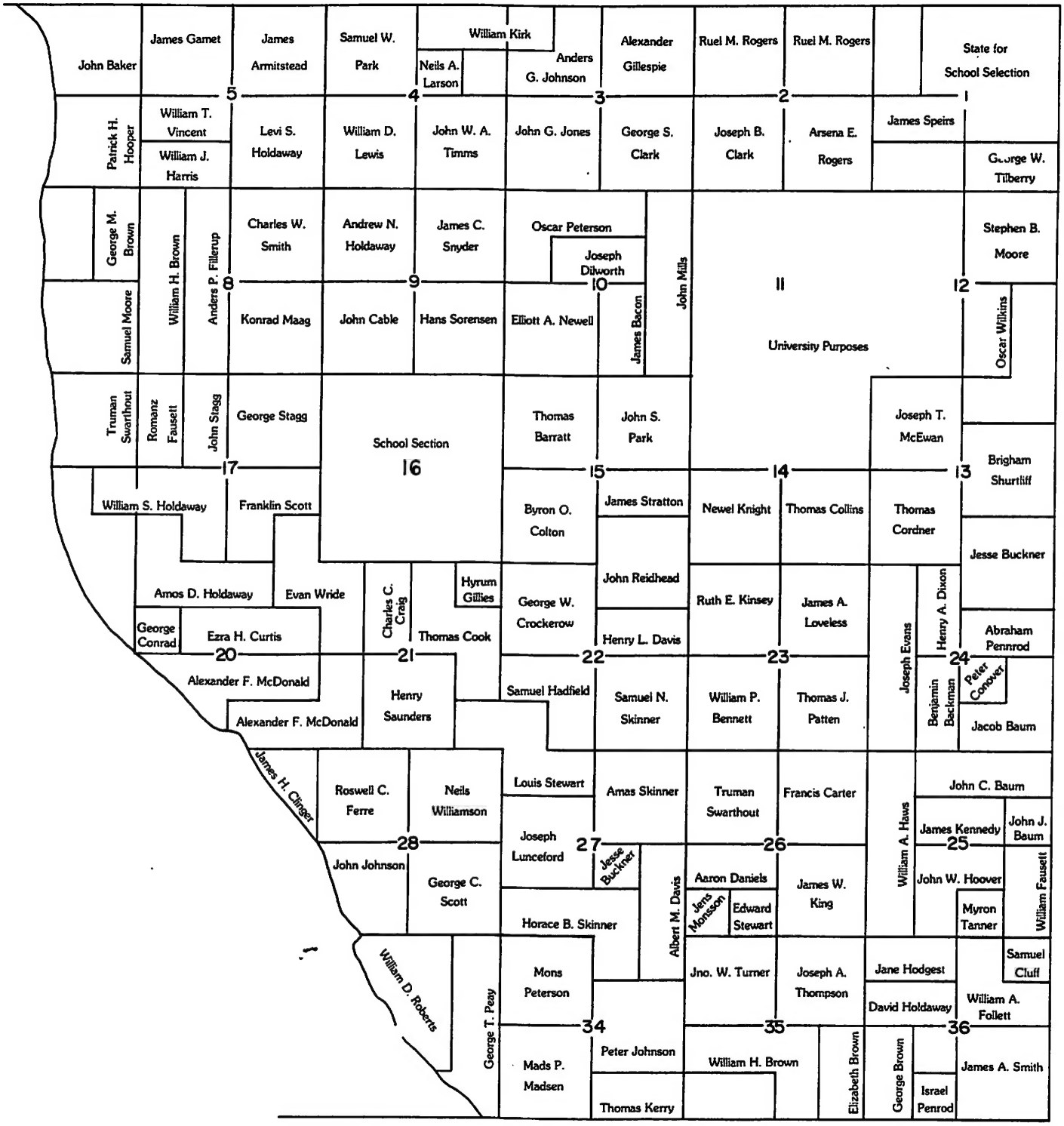
1978

THE PROVO BENCH

IRRIGATION CANALS, 1976



FIRST LAND OWNERS

CHAPTER FOUR
ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRY

by
Leon M. Frazier, Jr.

It is a mistake to believe that history on Provo Bench started when the Mormons began settling there. Important economic history took place long before that, for explorers and Indians used to traverse and live on the bench. Provo Bench, which became Orem City, was the remaining shore level of the ancient Lake Bonneville, a vast inland body of water that occupied much of the land now called the Great Basin.

Skeleton Of Prehistoric Mammoth Is Uncovered In Grand View Excavation

Remains of a hairy mammoth—a Utah resident of the Ice Age of 2,000,000 to 25,000,000 years ago—are being disinterred at a point just 15 feet off the highway in front of the Daniel P. Thomas residence in Grand View.

The find is being brought to light by Professor Golden York of the University of Utah, who thus far has found a complete jawbone, several ribs, a tooth weighing four to five pounds, and is at present excavating about a huge bony structure believed to be the pelvis.

Professor York, rather reticent as yet to say much of the find until he has had time to examine the skeleton structures more minutely, is enthusiastic about the discovery. He expects it be the finest specimen of its kind yet revealed in Utah.

Dr. Frederic J. Pack, University of Utah head geologist, and Professor York's fellow scientist, examined the digging grounds yesterday and photographed what he could of the discoveries. Both are highly enthused at prospects for an interesting find.

Professor York commented this morning that the bones are in excellent condition. As rapidly as they are disinterred they are covered with shellacing preparation, carefully wrapped in gunny sacks for transportation to the university's laboratory, and there will be carefully freed of all foreign covering.

Reports of early explorers indicate that the Provo River Valley was originally covered by grasses, not sagebrush as the Mormons found it. In 1776, Escalante, a Franciscan priest representing the Governor of New Mexico, explored Utah Valley. His observations of the benchland area are recorded in *Provo, Prioneer Mormon City:*

> And on the south and in other directions there are very spacious areas of good land. In all of it there are good and very abundant pastures, and in some places it produces flax and hemp in such quantities that it looks as though they [the Indians] had planted it on purpose.

His exploring party named the valley, Our Lady of Mercy of the Timpanogotzis, today's Utah Valley.

THE UTE INDIANS

Many bands of Ute Indians roamed the Provo Bench area when it was covered with grasses. In 1849, Lieutenant John W. Gunnison of the U.S. Topographical Engineers wrote concerning the Utes:

> This tribe consists of several bands under different chieftains, united by a common language and affinities as well as by numerous inter-marriages. They range over a large region of country, extending from California to New Mexico. They are a superstitious race, and have many cruel customs. Some tribes are reputed good warriors.

There was a period of time when the Utes had to wander on foot to gather food because they didn't have any horses. Eventually, they obtained horses from the Spanish in the Southwest either by stealing, trading, or trapping. The horses fed on the grasses. This in itself could have greatly altered the vast pastures and reduced them to sagebrush. The transition from grassland to sagebrush didn't take long.

The Indians who once lived in what is now called Utah Valley were a nomadic people. They moved from one place to another, including the Provo Bench and were dependent upon a searching, gathering, and hunting economy. They gathered nuts, seeds, berries, roots, and various vegetables for food. Throughout the Great Basin they hunted buffalo, deer, moose, bear, antelope, and mountain sheep; they also trapped beavers, and squirrels. Many of the Indians lived on coyotes, jackrabbits, fowl, mice, lizards, snakes, and large insects.

When enough food was present for a tribe, the Ute's dome-shaped wickiups covered with shredded sagebrush and their more advanced sweat lodges were arranged in a circle so that the doors all faced into a central arena. It was in such an arena that various strange dances and games took place, accompanied by music produced within the lodges by the scraping of notched sticks.

Provo, Pioneer Mormon City mentions an old document in the Spanish Archives of New Mexico by Manuel Mestes which gives evidence of a trip made to Timpanogos Lake [Utah Lake] in 1813 by some Mexicans who wanted to buy Indian slaves. The slave trade was important to the Indian economy. An old mountain man named Uncle Dick Wootton who trapped animals in Utah in 1837-38 later stated:

> It was no uncommon thing in those days to see a party of Mexicans in that country buying Indians, and while we were trapping there I sent a lot of peltries to Taos by a party of those same slave traders.

Bill Hickman, early Mormon pioneer, wrote about the Indians who inhabited the benchland areas:

> This [Provo] river was claimed by a strong band of Indians. These Utah Indians went by different names, such as Timpa-Utes, Pi-Utes, Yampa-Utes and Gosh-Utes, each having its Chief, fishing and hunting grounds, etc., which they claimed as their own; but in reality they were all the same tribe, spoke the same language, and would hunt and fish on each other's lands, as a general thing, unmolested. Sometimes these different bands would have difficulty; but in war with the whites they were all united.

MORMON SETTLERS

The Mormon pioneers emigrated to the valley of Great Salt Lake in 1847 on what was an arduous and death-inflicting journey. Since they had been exiled from their beautiful city of Nauvoo, Illinois, their greatest desire was to find a place to build a new city of Zion. The mountain desert in Mexican Territory was to be their new home. Brigham Young had envisioned the west as a place of economic security for the Mormons. Through his wise leadership and the industry of the pioneers, the Mormons prospered. The success of the Mormons in establishing a stable economy is an outstanding example of dedication.

Mormon headquarters were established in the arid and salty Great Salt Lake Valley in July, and by the end of the year, most of the surrounding regions, including Utah Valley had been explored, surveyed, and closely analyzed. Leonard Arrington reports in his economic history of the Great Basin:

> All of this research . . . confirmed the wisdom of the original intention to locate in the Salt Lake Valley. Cache Valley was too cold; Utah Valley was inhabited by Indians. Other valleys were too dry.

William Clayton, Mormon pioneer, indicates in his journal that Indian threats were a main reason for not immediately establishing Mormon colonies near Utah Lake and on Provo Bench:

> The Utah tribe of Indians inhabit the region around the Utah Lake and are bad people. If they catch a man alone, they are sure to rob and abuse him if they don't kill him, but parties of men are in no danger.

George Washington Bean, Mormon pioneer and explorer, recorded in his autobiography that in 1849, Brigham Young sent a group of colonists to settle the Provo River area, "for the purpose of farming and fishing and of instructing the Indians in cultivating the earth and of teaching them civilization." Bean recorded the account of the direct meeting between the Mormon colonists and Indians on Provo Bench. Within two and one-half miles of Timpanogos River (Provo River), the colony of pioneer families were greeted:

> . . . by a Young Indian Brave on horseback dashing toward us as fast as he could ride, throwing his arms and performing all sorts of wild gesticulations. When he got within about six rods of our head team, he jumped off his horse, threw his buffalo robe across our path and warned us not to pass that designated point. The Indians had got some idea of our intention to make settlement at the Timpanogos River, and this young brave named Ang-a-Te-Wats volunteered to stop us until an understanding could be arrived at. Dimick Huntington, our interpreter, told over all our good desires and intentions and that President Young, the Great Mormon Chief had sent us, and that we would like to be *Too-ege-tid-a-boo*—good friends—with the natives and do them much good if allowed to settle with them. The little brave dashed off to report to the tribe, and we slowly moved on. Presently a large party met us with the War Chief at their head, and we all stopped and talked the matter over again. The party seemed satisfied, and we moved on and were allowed to camp on the north side of the river. Many had sucker fish for dinner, but father and I had a fat stewed crane I killed with his rifle during the day.

Natural resources were soon utilized by the Mormon settlers. The colonists quickly built a big fort with twelve-foot long pickets, private corrals, gates, and houses all out of cottonwood timber. Cottonwood timber was plentiful along the river.

A controversial issue between the Mormons and the Indians was the slave trade. The following account by J. A. Jones illustrates how difficult it was for the Mormons to civilize the Indians and convince them of the evils of slavery:

> Stopping this slave business helped to sour some of Walker's band [a powerful Indian band]. They were in the habit of raiding on the Pahutes and low tribes, taking their children prisoners and selling them. Next year when they came up and camped on the Provo Bench, they had some Indian children for sale. They offered them to the Mormons who declined buying. Arapine, Walker's brother, became enraged saying that the Mormons had stopped the Mexicans from buying these children; that they had no right to do so, unless they bought them themselves. Several of us were present when he took one of these children by the heels and dashed its brains out on the hard ground, after which he threw the body towards us, telling us we had no hearts, or we would have bought it and saved its life. This was a strange argument, but it was the argument of an enraged savage. I never heard of any successful attempts to buy children afterwards by the Mexicans. If done at all, it was secretly.

The Mexicans were prevented from buying Indian slaves because the Mormons took them to court and prosecuted them.

MILITARY CAMPS

In August of 1857, word came to Salt Lake that United States Army troops led by General Sidney Johnston were advancing toward Deseret Territory because of presidential orders from James B. Buchanan. Johnston's Army spent that winter at Camp Scott near Fort Bridger. By March 1858, Governor Young had made the decision that Salt Lake Valley would have to be evacuated and, if needs be, the buildings burned to the ground to avoid government suppression. Residents of Salt Lake Valley moved south to Utah Valley across the Provo Bench. Over 30,000 people moved into Utah Valley from northern areas. By the end of May the entire move was accomplished.

On 26 June 1858 Johnston's Army found Salt Lake City empty. He and his troops marched on to Cedar Valley, where they established Camp Floyd.

The Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for Tuesday, 26 October 1858 indicates that General Johnston was invited to move his troops from Camp Floyd to the Provo Bench:

> A company of merchants and campfollowers have gone to establish a city on the Provo Bench to be called Centre City. It is reported that they have invited General Johnston to locate a military post there, and move in the spring with his troops.
>
> Governor Cumming requested President Young to send men to occupy all the land. The president [Brigham Young] said he did not wish to interfere, but would let them build a city, it will be a long time first, unless they get the "Mormons" to build it for them, and then they would cheat them out of their pay; he would like them to get the apostates to build the city for them.

A military post was not established on Provo Bench. Eventually, Johnston's troops left Utah, and the Salt Lake City residents moved back to their homes. Because their settlement in Utah Valley was temporary, these people had little economic effect on the benchland area.

The Nauvoo Legion, which had been partially reorganized in Utah on 27 March 1852, used the bench for their military drills. Andrew Jenson, LDS Church historian, wrote in his autobiography:

> In October 1870, I had my first experience in military training, a county military drill being held at Camp Burton, located on the so-called Dry Creek, on the Provo Bench, about four miles southeast of Pleasant Grove. About 4,000 men were gathered from different parts of Utah County, and the drill was carried out with strict discipline and order. This was a part of the annual drilling of the Nauvoo Legion. I rather enjoyed the exercises and at once felt a desire to train as a soldier and aspire to become an officer in that military organization. This, however, was not to be in my case, for after two more annual drills, which I attended and enjoyed, orders were given by Acting Governor Shaffer of Utah for the "Mormons" to cease their military evolutions.

On 30 July 1870, Fort Rawlins, a temporary military fort was established on the bench two and one-half miles north of the Provo River. The military was stationed there to protect Provo citizens from Indians, but a permanent fort was never built. For several reasons, the temporary fort was closed down by June 1871.

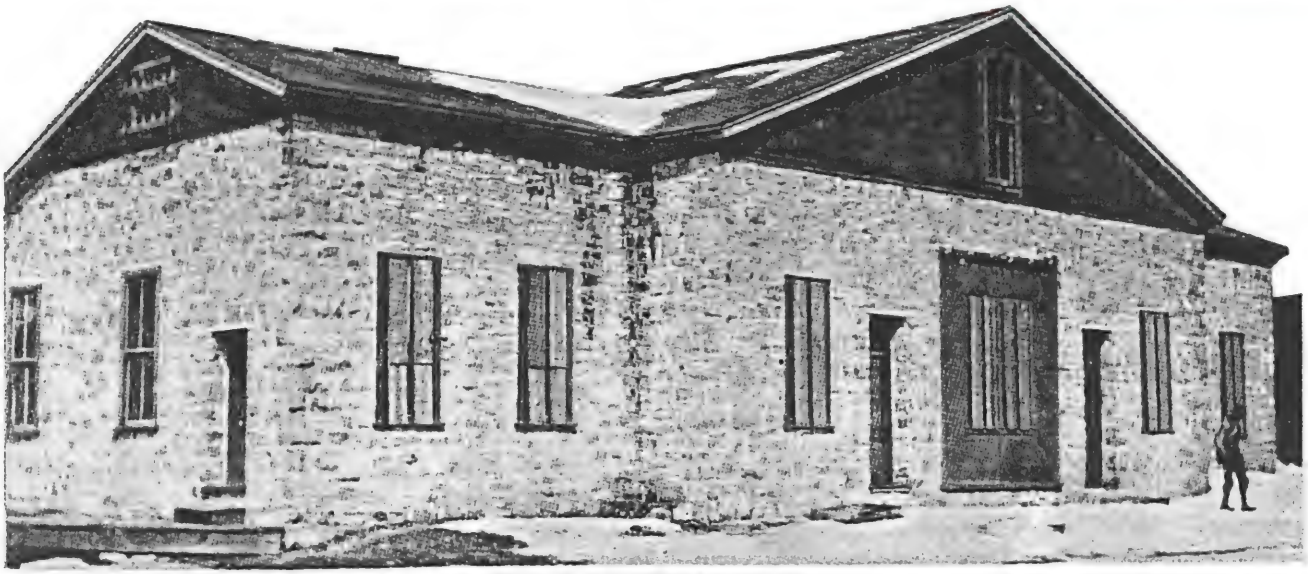
Fort Rawlins was undesirable from the viewpoints of the command and the soldiers. There was poor communication with higher command and the facilities were poor. Contempt from the townspeople worsened these problems to the point of open rebellion among some 20 of the 40 soldiers stationed at the fort.

On 22 September 1890, drunken soldiers marched prominent Provo men down West Main Street at gunpoint. Besides the verbal abuse inflicted on these men, property damage was incurred by other citizens whose houses were shot at by the passing soldiers.

Because Fort Rawlins existed for such a short time, it had little economic effect on the benchland area.

HYDROELECTRIC POWER

In 1890, Mr. L. L. Nunn successfully built and operated the first industrial hydroelectric power plant, the Ames Plant, near Telluride, Colorado. It transmitted alternating current at high voltage three miles away. In 1894, he began looking for possible hydroelectric power sites farther west in the Rocky Mountains. He chose the Provo River as the site for

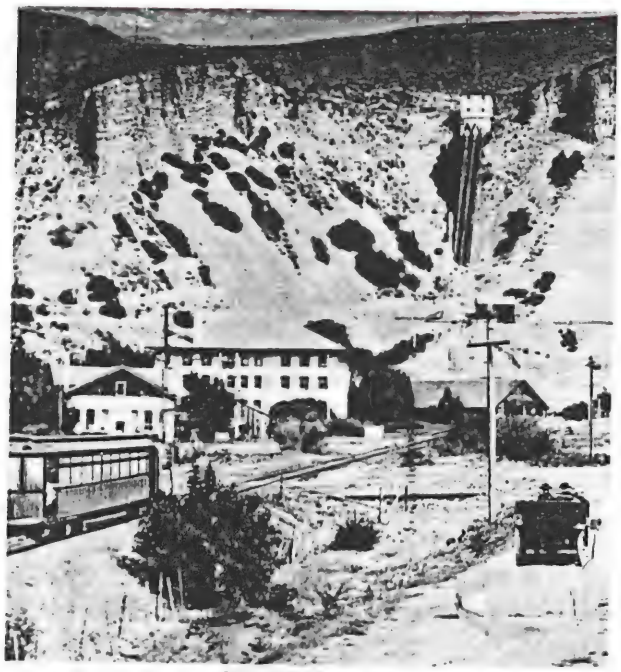


NUNN'S STATION, PROVO CANYON
Courtesy Utah Power and Light Company

the Nunn's Station which was operational in 1897. By the next year the turbine provided 750 kilowatts of power to a gold mine and a mill in Mercur, Utah, thirty-two miles away. This was a milestone in the history of electrical transmission because this electricity was being transmitted by the first 44,000-volt transmission line built in the United States.

In 1900, the Telluride Power Company was formed. The Nunn's Station was soon replaced by the Olmstead Plant which became operational in 1904. It supplied surrounding areas and increasingly distant areas (no farther than 50 miles away) with electricity.

The Olmstead Plant was unique in that it was equipped to provide on-the-job training in electrical



OLMSTEAD PLANT
Courtesy BYU Archives

engineering for its employees. Mr. L. L. Nunn conceived this company-employee relationship. His brother, Paul Nunn, directed the program, also used at other plants, that eventually became the Telluride Institute. The Telluride Association, as it was named in 1911, is presently seated at Cornell University. The impact, though, of that early program is remarkable. At the time, the Olmstead Plant offered the only competent training program in electrical engineering besides the program taught at Ohio State. Some young men from the bench area were trained under this two-year program and became outstanding engineers.

In 1912, Utah Power and Light Company was formed; it purchased the Telluride Power Company, which included the Olmstead Plant. This plant is still operated under the direction of Utah Power and Light Company.

TRANSPORTATION

State Street in Orem was originally established as part of the great corridor highway that linked Salt Lake City with Southern Utah and California. State Street opened for travel in the 1850's, was eight rods wide and ran between what is now 2000 South and 2000 North in Orem. What originally was a dusty, rutted, rocky road in the summer, and a muddy, sloshy road in the winter is now a paved, modern road that is part of U. S. Highway 91.

The transition from buggies and carriages to automobiles did not occur overnight on Provo Bench. The evolution of modern transportation was gradual, yet inevitable and helpful to the benchland. The creaky Model-T's and the fragile trucks that appeared early in the century on the bench can't compare with the cars and diesel trucks that now traverse Utah's highways, but they did increase trade with neighboring towns and cities.

Many roads were graveled in order to strengthen them. The old Provo Canyon Road was graveled in 1911-12. Early settlers hauled loads of rock from their benchland farms to gravel the old Canyon Road. The highway department crushed the rock to make the hard gravel. As transportation improved, trade and commercial activity increased.

By 1910, Provo Bench was becoming a prosperous agricultural community. Accessibility to outside markets inevitably required a railroad. Electrically driven railroads were fairly new, so it is understandable why in 1913 "newspapers of Utah were virtually unanimous in proclaiming the building of the Orem Railroad the biggest event of that year." The Salt Lake and Utah Railroad, or the Orem Line as it was called by many people, was a 67-mile electric rail line financed and constructed by A. J. Orem and Company under the direction of Walter C. Orem. The line from Salt Lake to Provo, which passed through Provo Bench, was opened for electric car service on 24 July, 1913. By 1917, the Orem Line extended from Salt Lake to Payson.

A railroad depot was eventually built in Orem, but because of highway improvements and increased use of automobiles in the 1920's, passenger business declined on the Orem Line. In the 1930's, the line went into receivership, and a foreclosure sale of all properties took place in the first few months of 1938.

A NEW NAME FOR THE BENCH

Some people on the bench recognized the need for an organization that would promote better business conditions. One day in April, 1914, Oscar H. Anderson, a salesman, rode on horseback to nearly every house on the bench trying to get residents to attend a commercial meeting to be held at Parcell's

OREM STATION, 25 West 700 North
Courtesy BYU Archives

DO YOU REALIZE

That the construction and operation of the Salt Lake & Utah Railroad (Orem Line) has been one of the most important elements in the development and growth of Utah County.

The S. L. & U. R. R. is a Utah Railroad serving Utah people between Salt Lake City Payson and Magna. A full line of freight rates with superior freight service. Route all your carload and merchandise shipments via "S. L. & U. R. R."

Free drayage on L. C. L. freight.

USE OUR RED ARROW FREIGHT SERVICE

PATRONIZE THE HOME ROAD

Fast frequent passenger service at low fares.

Week-end excursion tickets on sale each week, return limit to Monday following date of sale. Mileage and Commutation Books, Two cents per mile.

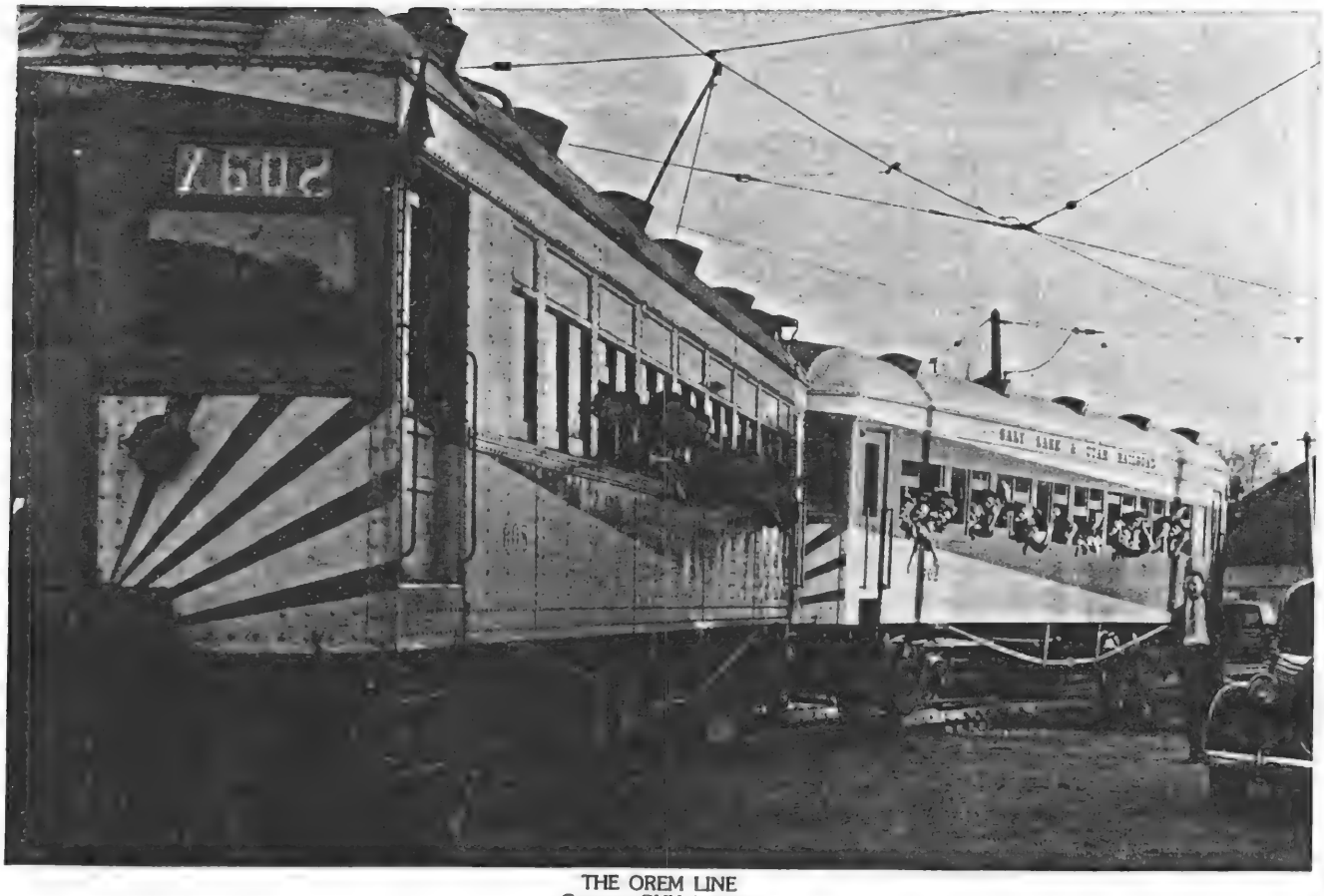
RIDE THE BIG RED CARS

Salt Lake & Utah Railroad

(Orem Line)

Ask agents for information or address Aldon J. Anderson, Traffic Manager, Salt Lake City.

Courtesy BYU Archives



THE OREM LINE
Courtesy BYU Archives

INTERIOR, THE OREM LINE
Courtesy BYU Archives

Hall. The meeting was held on 16 April 1914.

The Provo Bench Commercial Club was soon formed and a fee to join the club was set at one dollar per year, payable quarterly. Oscar Anderson who had been elected secretary of the club recalls:

> Mr. Orem [Walter C.] and his company were very influential business forces in early Utah. We knew this. Our commercial club president, T. Britt Woodward, felt we somehow ought to honor the Orems. After all, they had been the first ones that ushered the railroad, their Orem Line, onto Provo Bench. We still needed a depot and hopefully other enrichments, too. And we needed a unique and uncommon name like Orem under which our fruit industry could identify and thrive. We therefore voted that the bench be called Orem from then on.

WALTER C. OREM

A committee from the Provo Bench Commercial Club was appointed to meet with Walter Orem and inform him of the proposed honor to name the bench after him and his company. This impressed Mr. Orem and he purchased about 40 acres in an area roughly encompassing 600 North to 800 North and from 400 West to State Street. The Orem Company instructed the city to tax their property to the fullest with the hopes that the forty acres would become a townsite; this dream never materialized. However, in 1919, the Provo Bench was incorporated as a town under the name of Orem, although Walter C. Orem was never a resident of the bench.

In 1924, the Provo Bench Commercial Club became the Orem Chamber of Commerce with Oscar H. Anderson as its first president. Through the years the Orem Chamber of Commerce has successfully stimulated business activity and promoted its slogan, "Things Are Happening in Orem."

COMMUNICATION

The first newspaper in Orem was *The Voice of Sharon* established in 1929 as a monthly publication of the LDS Sharon Stake; Dee Brown was the editor. In 1933, this publication was taken over by the Sharon Cooperative Educational and Recreational Association, SCERA, with Myrl Wentz as editor. Many of the same individuals served as administrators in the Sharon Stake and the SCERA program; however, by transferring control of the paper to the SCERA, a larger geographic area was served. *The Voice of Sharon* was printed in Provo by the Utah Valley Publishing Company and became a weekly newspaper.

In 1942, Arthur V. Watkins, president of the Sharon Stake, acquired a controlling interest in the publishing firm and changed the name of the paper to the *Orem-Geneva Times*. In 1948, the Utah Valley Publishing Company and the office of the Orem-Geneva Times were established at 546 South State Street in Orem. When Mr. Watkins was elected to the United States Senate in 1946, he sold the newspaper and the Utah Valley Publishing Company to M. Neff Smart, who served as both publisher and editor. On 1 July 1953, Harold B. Sumner purchased the Utah Valley Publishing Company and served as publisher of the *Orem-Geneva Times* with Hollis Scott as editor. Mr. Sumner now serves as both publisher and editor.

BUSINESS AND MANUFACTURING

On the lower east edge of the Provo Bench hill a blacksmith shop was established in 1876 by John H. Carter. In the early 1870's, John acquired 85 acres of land northwest of Provo, which was later called Carterville. In 1876, "the road to this community was merely a trail through the sagebrush." Yet, ox teams were used to uproot trees and brush, canals were dug, lands were plowed, and by 1879, "a flourishing little village stood where there had been nothing but wilderness a few years before."

Jens Peter Pederson established a blacksmith shop in 1900 on the southeast corner of 400 South State. The business was moved in 1915 to 671 North State Street. Mr. Pederson was succeeded by his son, Peter Morris Pederson. The original building was replaced in 1939. When Jens' grandson, Max Pederson, took over the management, the business became known as Max's Repair Shop.

Pearl Bunnel Newell, who moved onto the bench in 1890, mentions that there was a molasses mill at 1150 South State owned by Thomas J. Patten. It was run by horsepower and was a necessity because nearly everyone had a patch of sugar cane.

Since there were no stores on the bench, the residents had to go into Provo to get the things they

CHRONOLOGY OF PROVO BENCH AND OREM CITY

compiled by Dale Braithwaite

1848 First regular travel across Provo Bench.
1858 First water survey of Provo Bench
1858 Attempt to locate military post on Provo Bench.
1862 First irrigation canal started.
1863 First irrigation company formed.
1864 Provo Bench Canal first used for irrigation.
1865 Petition legislature for more water from Provo River.
1866 North Union Canal Company formed.
1867 George A. Smith given land to encourage devlopment.
1868 Proposed townsite on Provo Bench; did not develop.
1869 Federal land office opens in Salt Lake City.
1869 Unsuccessful attempt to dig first well.
1870 Dan Buchner dug first successful well.
1877 First family spent entire winter on Provo Bench.
1880 First school held in a home.
1881 Provo Bench separated from Provo City for tax purposes.
1883 First school building completed.
1883 First LDS Sunday School organized.
1885 Orem Eleventh (Timpanogos) Ward organized.
1885 First brick home built.
1885 First peach trees bear fruit.
1886 First LDS Relief Society organized.
1889 First LDS Primary organized.
1890 First business established.
1892 Twenty new homes built.
1892 First fruit shipping business started.
1894 Sharon School built.
1898 First post office established.
1898 Orem Eleventh (Timpanogos) Ward chapel completed.
1911 Orem Third (Sharon) Ward chapel completed.
1912 Lincoln High School District formed.
1912 Electricity came to Provo Bench.
1913 Orem inter-urban railroad built.
1914 First fruit shipped under Orem label.
1919 Petition presented for Orem to become a town.
1920 Culinary water system completed.
1921 Lincoln High School built.
1923 First town marshal appointed.
1929 First newspaper established.

1933 SCERA organized.
1938 James G. Stratton property purchased for town hall.
1938 Portion of Grandview annexed to Orem.
1938 Orem City Library established.
1939 Portion of Carterville annexed to Orem.
1941 SCERA auditorium (theater) completed.
1941 Orem became a Third Class city.
1942 Construction of Geneva Steel began.
1942 First police car purchased.
1943 Portions of Lakeview and Vineyard annexed.
1943 Six subdivisions approved.
1943 Orem City Cemetery opened.
1943 Attempt to change name of Orem to Geneva.
1945 City sewer system established.
1946 First deep well drilled for culinary purposes.
1947 First fire chief appointed.
1949 State Street resurfaced, became a "velvet strip."
1956 Orem High School completed.
1958 City government changed to city manager-council form.
1959 First shopping center built west of City Hall.
1959 $1,000,000 sewage treatment plant completed.
1970 New city hall dedicated.
1972 University Mall developed.
1975 Construction on Utah Technical College Orem campus begun.
1976 Orem High School A'Cappella Choir sang at the nation's bicentennial.
1976 Orem City Heritage Center dedicated.

CHAPTER ONE


Gary E. Smith